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# *The MCA Advisory*

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*The Newsletter of Medal Collectors of America*

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## **Coming Events**

**Member's Meeting July 31, 2008**

**Time: 3:00 p.m.**

**Room 316, ANA Convention**



## From the Editor

These are good times for MCA. We have a solid bank account, a growing membership and a strong flow of high quality material for The Advisory. However, as John Sallay points out, we need to be active on multiple fronts if our Club is to achieve its potential.

One new activity suggested at our last Board meeting was to enrich our tradition by conducting formal interviews of our senior members. Capture the history while we can, because life is ephemeral. This point was brought home in a dramatic way by the sad announcement of the death of Kahlil Gibran.

A painter, sculpteur and collector of Renaissance medals, Kahlil was a towering talent. His vast database of knowledge and his creative views on the hobby will be symbolized by his collection, but symbolized only. The essence of who he was and what he meant to us, his fellow collectors, is now beyond retrieve.

The desirability of interviewing our icons is overwhelming—and it is easily done—IF members volunteer to do the interviewing. Herewith a fervent plea for volunteers: if you want to enrich future as well as present hobbyists, give me a call. Better yet, contact John Sallay who will help you get started. You can have a lot of fun and feel good about having the fun—an unbeatable parlay.

## Annual Meeting

Our annual meeting will take place at the ANA convention in Baltimore on July 31<sup>st</sup>. We have the 3:00 p.m. time slot and will meet in Room 316.

After appropriate introductions, we will hear from our officers and webmaster. Following club business, our speaker will be Jim Cheevers, Associate Director/Senior Curator at the United States Naval Academy Museum. Jim is the steward of an important

collection of naval medals including the John Paul Jones medal in gold.

At the conclusion of Jim's talk, we will announce the recipients of the Carl W.A. Carlson Award and the Gloria Stamm Chamberlain Award. The Carlson Award is given for long and distinguished service to the hobby of medal collecting. The Chamberlain Award is given for promising contributions from relative newcomers. The Club is fortunate to have a plethora of worthy candidates for each. Carl W.A. Carlson Award was instituted in 1999. Georgia Stamm Chamberlain Award was instituted in 2004.

The names of previous winners are:

2000 Carlson: John W. Adams  
2001 Carlson: R.W. Julian  
2002 Carlson: Christopher Eimer  
2003 Carlson: Dr. David Menchell  
2004 Carlson: Dr. George Fuld  
Chamberlain: Vicken Yegparian  
2005 Carlson: Anthony Terranova  
Chamberlain: John Kraljevich  
2006 Carlson: Michael Hodder  
Chamberlain: Max Spiegel  
2007 Carlson: David T. Alexander  
Chamberlain: Len Augusburger

There will be a social hour following our meeting if the attendees choose to be sociable.

## Webmaster's Report

(by Ben Weiss)

## New Feature

As planned we have added a new feature to our MCA Website which we have called the MEMBERS' CORNER. It can be found as a link from every page of the website. On this new page we will be posting articles and images and descriptions of the medals that our members wish to share with its readers. If you have anything you would like to post here, please let me know.

Right now I'd like to keep the decision open as to content so we can see what

the members would like to post. My own preference is to allow a great deal of flexibility and diversity of its format in order to encourage as much members' participation as possible. For this is its goal. The only proviso is that the images be of high quality.

This new feature is limited to current members of the MCA, so any others wishing to post portions of their collection here should consider joining our organization. (An Application Form may be found attached to this Advisory. It also can be found online at our website).

I am pleased to report that we already have our first contribution. John Sallay has generously provided us with images and brief descriptions of his wonderful collection of American School Medals. While mostly from the United States, they cover school medals from around the world.

As this is YOUR section. I would appreciate having any comments and suggestions about this new feature. Again, please send me any material you would like to post here. This page is now open for business.

Please be sure to visit:

[www.medalcollectors.org](http://www.medalcollectors.org)

Best wishes,

Ben

## **A Nini Medallion's Brooklyn Connection** (Max B. Spiegel)

A recent conversation I had with noted colonial coin expert John Kraljevich turned to the subject of Nini's Franklin medallions. Specifically, he asked about the terra cotta Nini medallion I purchased out of the Presidential Coin and Antique Company June 30, 2007 Baltimore auction (lot 524). Peculiarly, there was an inked inscription on the reverse that read: "E. M. Young / 150 St. James Place / Brooklyn, L.I." A proud resident of Brooklyn, I could not pass up the opportunity to own a Nini that had at some point been in the possession of

another Brooklynite. Especially interesting was that the address referred to "Long Island" (L.I.), as opposed to New York City, meaning that this E. M. Young wrote the inscription prior to Brooklyn's incorporation into New York City in 1898. The question remained, however, who was this E. M. Young?

Before delving into the subject of Young, I will give a brief overview of Nini medallions. In 1772 Giovanni Battista Nini, an Italian engraver, accepted a commission from the French courtier Jacques Donatien Le Ray de Chaumont to be the superintendent of his ceramics plant. A friend of Benjamin Franklin, de Chaumont invited the American to stay at his home outside of Paris, where Franklin lived for nine years. In 1777, to honor his guest, de Chaumont asked Nini to create a model for a medallion based on five portraits of Franklin by the English artist Thomas Walpole. The design chosen depicted Franklin wearing a fur cap surrounded by the legend: B. FRANKLIN . AMERICAN." Beneath the bust is NINI F. (Nini, fecit), the date 1777, and a coat of arms. The June 30, 2007 Presidential catalog cites Richard Margolis as saying, "This is an imaginary coat of arms devised by Nini to honor Franklin's invention of the lightning rod; it depicts an arm holding a lightning rod which attracts a bolt of lightning coming out of a cloud." The Jaeger-Bowers 100 Greatest Tokens and Medals (which ranked the Nini medallion 29th) estimates 100 to 200 extant in terra cotta (Fuld FR.ME.L.3), in addition to 15 to 20 in bronze (Betts-548) and two in silver, which were cast sometime after the original terra cottas. These medallions were evidently quite popular at the time, and were hung in homes on both sides of the Atlantic.

So who was E. M. Young, a sometime owner of one of these Franklin medallions, which he probably proudly displayed at his home in Brooklyn? After searching through census data and Brooklyn's newspapers, I came across our Young. An obituary in the now-defunct Brooklyn Standard Union reads that an

Edward M. Young died on Friday, April 17, 1891. A funeral service was held the following Sunday at 2 pm at 150 St. James Place, which the newspaper describes as the home of his son-in-law, William Gray. This information spawned more questions: Who was Young's daughter? Did he have other children? What about a wife? Where did he live if the address on the back of the Nini medallion was his son-in-law's home?

Searching through the U.S. Census data from the decades prior to his death, I found out a great deal about Edward M. Young and his family. Census data collected on July 28, 1860 describe Edward as being a 50 year old bookkeeper, married with three children. His wife, Mary J., was 47 at the time, and their three children were Eliza (15), Frederick E. (11), and Franklin J. (7). Perhaps the young Franklin was named after Benjamin Franklin, whose Nini medallion probably adorned their wall. The 1860 census writes that all three children attended school in the past year. His "personal estate" was valued at \$1,500, a typical working class sum.

While I was unable to locate the Young family in any prior censuses or for 1870, the 1880 census yields more information. They are listed as residing at 128 St. James Place, with Eliza no longer a resident. Sometime during the past 20 years she had married and moved out, but apparently not far, as her husband's house was 150 St. James Place, according to the Brooklyn Standard Union. Still living with Edward and Mary were their two sons, Frederick and Franklin. Frederick was now 30 and had been unemployed for the past year. Franklin was 27 and was a cashier for "Powder Co." Interestingly, the Young's had two additional occupants in 1880, one a boarder, the other a servant. With Eliza out of the house, the Young's leased her room to a Miss R. Vanway, age 78. The extra income from the boarder probably enabled the Young's to have a live-in servant, Mary F. Boroughs, who was 19 years old. Boroughs is listed as mulatto, born in

Pennsylvania, with the location of her parents' births listed only as the "south."

128/178/188	Young Edward M. W 50/69	
	Mary J. W 47/67	Wife
	Frederick E. W 30/69	Son
	Franklin J. W 27/69	Son
	Vanway R. W 78/78	Boarder
	Boroughs Mary F. W 19/79	Servant

The family homes at 128 and 150 St. James Place would now be considered part of the Brooklyn neighborhood of Clinton Hill, named for DeWitt Clinton, a former mayor of New York City, governor, and presidential hopeful. Although once considered a rural destination, by the 1860s developers were building the row houses that would dominate the landscape by 1880. The row house where Edward M. Young lived at 128 St. James Place still stands, although its appearance has since been changed by the addition of vinyl siding. At 150 St. James Place there now stands an apartment building, encompassing the lots of the former row houses at 148 and 150. While these row houses no longer appear as they did when Young lived there, the row houses on the opposite side of the street are largely unaltered and give a good feel for what the entire neighborhood would have looked like. Beginning in 1875, the oil executive Charles Pratt built himself and his children several magnificent mansions in the area, some of which are still standing nearby, with elegant carriage houses just a few blocks away. Today Clinton Hill is largely middle class and home to Pratt University, with many of the tree lined blocks of row houses still standing much as they would have appeared a century and a half ago.

The 1880 census lists Edward's mother being born in New York and his father "on the Atlantic Ocean." Presumably, this would mean that his father was born on the boat while immigrating to the United States.

Unfortunately, I was unable to find any conclusive immigration papers regarding his

father. Interestingly, Franklin J. Young is described as being born on Long Island, as opposed to New York for the rest of his family. Perhaps the Young's lived in Manhattan for a while before moving to Brooklyn, and therefore the places of birth are distinguished as such. The last piece of information that can be gleamed from the 1880 census is that Edward's occupation is now listed as banker, as opposed to bookkeeper. It may be the same job, or it may indicate a promotion or change of careers for Edward Young.

There are still some unanswered questions about Young, and sadly some answers may have been lost to time. Unfortunately the stories of the many average Americans are unrecorded and therefore nothing other than a few dates may be known. While I know that Edward was born in 1810 or 1811, I still do not know when he married, where he might have lived previously, where he worked as a banker, or why he wrote his son-in-law's address on the reverse of the medallion (perhaps he spent his final years living there). There is also an accession number (1991.395) penciled on the reverse from some unknown museum. I will continue my search for answers to these, and other, questions, and hopefully will gradually piece together the history of this medallion.

It is not always possible to trace any previous owners of a numismatic item, but when it can be pedigreed, it is a wonderful feeling of being connected with the past. Like me, well over a century later, Edward M. Young lived in a typical Brooklyn row house. He was not wealthy, but he lived comfortably, and was probably an average New Yorker. While there are still many questions that remain to be answered, I am glad that I could find some information, and link the past to the present. I imagine walking the same streets as Edward Young, going to the same parks, and displaying his Nini medallion proudly in my living room, just as he would have many years ago.



# The Libertas Americana Medal and Joseph Wright

(by Karl Moulton)

History is strange indeed. People, events, and purposes become misinterpreted, distorted, forgotten, and recreated into what we think we know today.

In my 2007 book *“Henry Voigt and Others, Involved with America’s Early Coinage”*, p.31, I wrote about the Libertas Americana medal: *“The original concept for this medal was Franklin’s, the obverse design by Joseph Wright, the reverse design by French painter Espirit-Antoine Gibelin, while Augustin Dupre of the French Mint was merely the engraver and has been given most of the credit because his name appears on both sides”*.

For 225 years the creation of the beautiful and historically significant Libertas Americana medals has been attributed to Augustin Dupre. Based on my recent research, I believe Dupre only engraved the dies. He did superb work, but in my opinion, Dupre did not have anything to do with creating the designs. This article attempts to bring into focus the background of this interesting piece of Americana.

Benjamin Franklin was the person responsible for the Libertas Americana medal; it was not commissioned by Congress as part of the Comitia Americana series. Nor was it an official French Mint creation even though the medals were struck there in April of 1783. In a March 4, 1782, letter to Robert Livingston, the Secretary of the Department of Foreign Affairs, Franklin wrote, *“This puts me in mind of a Medal I have had a Mind to Strike since the late great Event you gave me an Account of; representing the United States by the Figure of an Infant Hercules in his cradle, strangling the two Serpents, and France by that of Minerva, sitting by as his Nurse with her Spear and Helmet, and her Robe Speck’d with a few Fleurs-de-lis.”* This was soon after the news of Cornwallis’s surrender at Yorktown had

reached France. These elements became the reverse design.

Livingston responded on May 30, 1782, *“I am charmed with your idea of the medal to perpetuate the memory of York & Saratoga the design is simple, elegant, & strikingly expressive of the subject.”* So it is clear that Franklin already had the basic reverse design in mind. This is further evidenced in an April 2, 1782, letter that Ben Franklin wrote to George Washington, *“The Infant Hercules has now strangled the two Serpents that attack’d him in his Cradle, and I trust future History will be answerable.”*

Sometime during the summer of 1782, according to the standard French medal-making process, the L’Académie Française assigned to Franklin an individual to serve as liaison. This person was Alexandre-Theodore Brongniart, and he was an influential member of the Royal Academy of Architecture. On Sunday, 22 September 1782 he wrote to Franklin, *“Sir, I have at last obtained from the sculptor of whom I had had the honor of speaking to you, two fairly large sketches of medals. I also asked a painter among my friends to draw the same subject and I believe that he has done well at it. Which day do you want, sir, that we should go to Passy to have the honor of presenting the works to you? Or if your business should call you to Paris and you wanted to give yourself the trouble of coming to my place, you would find everything gathered there with me keeping watch. But the sole favor that I would ask of you is that you do not inconvenience yourself at all, more than happy if I can have advanced your ideas. I have the honor to be, with the most respectful sentiments, sir, your very humble and obedient servant.* [Thanks to David Yoon for this translation.] Thus, we can presume that at least three sketches had been prepared, two by the “sculpteur and one from Brongniart’s painter friend, Espirit-Antoine Gibelin.

It is unfortunate that Brongniart did not mention any names (or nationalities) in his

letters. If he had, there would be no reason for my assertion that Joseph Wright created the obverse design seen on the Libertas Americana medal because this would have been previously known. Brongniart is first mentioned in a numismatic text, the 2007 John Adams/Anne Bentley *“Comitia Americana”* book. Previous numismatic texts (e.g. Cornelius Vermule, 1971, *“Numismatic Art in America”* p.27) and various auction catalogues describing the Libertas Americana medal were limited, with nearly all comments extolling Dupre for creating them only because his name appears on both dies. There was no differentiation between the designing and engraving.

So, who was the “sculpteur” mentioned by Brongniart? I believe it was Joseph Wright, and will present background evidence to support this assertion.

## The Case for Joseph Wright

Most people involved in American numismatics have little knowledge about Joseph Wright. He was at the first U.S. Mint for a few months in 1793 and then died. Unfortunately, that is about all there is to be found in numismatic texts. However, if one goes beyond numismatics, there is much to be discovered. Indeed, there was a book published about him by Monroe Fabian in 1985 titled, *“Joseph Wright – American Artist, 1756-1793”*.

When Wright finished his six years of study at the Royal Academy of Arts in London, and was becoming independent of his mother, he was known primarily as a sculptor, having received a “Best in Class” silver medal (in a yearly exhibit of the works of the Royal Academy’s students) for his model of a plaster cast of an “Academy Figure” in 1778. In order to even be considered for admission to the Royal Academy, an applicant had to provide two separate drawings or models from some plaster cast. Wright had a strong background in this field as his mother, Patience Wright, was a

renowned sculptor of wax figures, who had shops in New York, London, and Paris. Patience had gone to London with a cordial letter of introduction from her friend, Mrs. Jane Mecom of Cambridge, Ben Franklin’s favorite younger sister.

The most significant point to validate Joseph Wright as a sculptor can be found in the fact that he was the first of just two artists, the other being French sculptor Jean A. Houdon (along with three assistants in October 1785), to make a plaster mold of George Washington. This happened in August 1783 after Wright had returned to America. Charles Thomson, the Secretary of the U.S. Congress, wrote a letter of introduction for Wright to Washington, who had recently arrived at Rocky Hill, NJ. Part of Thomson’s letter reads “...*The Bearer, Mr. Wright, is recommended to me as an Artist skilled in taking Busts...requesting the favour of your Excellency to admit him to try his talents.*” With this, Wright directed the future president to lie down on a table so he could place Plaster of Paris over Washington’s face. Unfortunately, the mold wasn’t completely hardened and broke when it was removed; but Wright was able to repair it and make a bust of Washington’s features. This bust of Washington was finished, put on display at the State House (Independence Hall) in Philadelphia, and promised to Congress in December 1784. Wright had also painted Washington’s portrait and sold him the original that May.

Wright had gone to Paris in December of 1781 to be with his mother who had been there since the summer of that year, and to further his study of painting. When he, accompanied by his mother, visited with the Franklin family (Benjamin and his grandson William “Temple” Franklin) at Passy, Wright quickly formed a bond with Temple (they were both 25 years old). Temple was instrumental in developing Wright’s career as a portrait painter by providing a direct introduction to a patron of



the arts and Parisian salon convener, Madame Charlotte de Cheminot.

On September 4, 1782, official notice from England to Richard Oswald, the head British peace negotiator in Paris, stating, “...*that the King has consented to declare the Independence of America...*” reached the Franklin residence in Passy. Wright was probably there (along with the two sons of Robert Morris) having been delayed in leaving France at Nantes and returning to Paris in mid-August. This was glorious news. American independence was finally a reality! Franklin’s proposed medal could now be finished. Since there are no extant letters regarding the selected obverse design, I suggest the two sketches could have been done by Wright rather quickly, like those of the Morris boys (which are no longer extant) – possibly during the few weeks after he returned in August during that joyous time for Americans to be in France. Unfortunately, Wright’s activities are mostly undocumented during this brief three-week period.

The main design theme that Franklin came up with in March was already known. The figure representing LIBERTY was not. If Wright did this, he might have used his New York City girlfriend (Sarah Vandervoort) as a model, drawn from memory, and made sure the important pole and cap design element was included in the background. That’s all that would have been needed for a sketch of LIBERTY. Joseph Wright left once again for the French coast the following day (September 5, 1782). Two weeks later Brongniart’s letter to Ben Franklin was written regarding the proposed design selection.

## The Liberty Cap and Pole

Although the Liberty Cap and Pole theme can be traced back to ancient times, the idea of the French creating the pole & cap elements to depict Liberty in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century must be balanced by the 1763 sketch of

Englishman John Wilkes. Wilkes had been a Member of the English Parliament until he was ousted and arrested because of his defiance of the new King George III and his Prime Minister. His strong opposition to the King, and later support of the American Revolution, made him a popular figure in both England and the American colonies. The town of Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania is named in his honor. John Wilkes and Isaac Barre were both members of the English Parliament who vigorously opposed the British monarch. The sketch of Wilkes shows a rounded, hard skullcap centered on a pole with the word LIBERTY displayed prominently across the front.



JOHN WILKES

William Hogarth's popular caricature, "drawn from the life" in 1763, brought Americans a glimpse of the stormy figure who was to become Patience Wright's friend and ally in London.

In the spring of 1768 Wilkes was again elected to Parliament and then promptly re-arrested. He was taken to King’s Bench Prison. The next few weeks saw an ever-increasing throng assemble outside the prison walls. On May 10, 1768, a crowd of approximately 15,000 chanted, “Wilkes and Liberty”, “No

Liberty, No King”, and “Damn the King! Damn the Government! Damn the Justices!” Fearing an attempted rescue, the deployed troops opened fire killing seven civilians. This caused uprisings all over London. Wilkes was eventually released from prison in April 1770. As it turns out, when Patience Wright moved to London in 1772, after visiting first with her new friend Benjamin Franklin at his residence on Craven St., she became acquainted with both John Wilkes and Isaac Barre, of whom she made wax bust sculptures.

In the summer of 1773, because of her modeling talents, Patience was commissioned to make life sized wax figures of both the British King and Queen, whom she referred to merely as “George” and “Charlotte”. Patience was often seen coming and going in the Royal Palace on her own terms, needing no formal invitation as she was a favored guest at that point. She even had lengthy, private discussions with the King, and was always honest and quite frank in her dialogue – a true women’s rights advocate.

John Wilkes was elected the Lord Mayor of London in 1774 and became a devoted friend and ally of Patience Wright during her later protest against King George III. Then the American Revolution began. Patience acted as an American spy after the war started, sending to America plans of troop movements, and other information, contained in wax heads and figures. After she fell completely out of favor with the British monarch, she posed for a sketch in the fall of 1777 that defied the occupation of Philadelphia by the British forces. This took a tremendous amount of courage for any woman to do, particularly an American woman in London. Much more about Patience Wright and John Wilkes can be found in the 1965 book “*Patience Wright – American Artist and Spy in George III’s London*” by Charles Coleman Sellers, who also wrote “*Benjamin Franklin in Portraiture*” in 1962.



The British Museum

PATIENCE WRIGHT, 1777

Drawing by John Downman, A.R.A., whose drawings of Benjamin West, “my most beloved teacher,” date from the same time.

As can be seen in the image above, Patience had copied the Wilkes protest theme by using a symbolic pole and hard, centered Liberty cap in her 1777 sketch “*The Personification of Liberty*”, which read “Liberty I am, and Liberty is Wright; and Slavery do I disdain with all my Might”. Joseph Wright was there when this prelude to war took place. His deep feelings for Liberty were reflected in his later designs – the first being sketches submitted for the Libertas Americana medal in 1782. Notice that there is a small, hard, centered cap on the pole which seems to defy gravity and is similar to the earlier Wilkes and Patience Wright sketches.

Thus, Wright knew that the Liberty cap on a pole was a powerful and popular image in defiance of tyranny. One reason there is no physical evidence to support Wright as the designer of the Libertas Americana obverse is because Wright was returning to America (when the Libertas Americana designs were being reviewed and selected by Franklin, Brongniart, and probably Gibelin), and the ship he was on ran aground in a snowstorm off the coast of Maine. The only items he salvaged

were a few diplomatic letters, which he eventually delivered to prominent Americans. The rest of his personal belongings including papers, letters, paintings, and other sketches he did in France were apparently lost and washed out to sea. By Christmas 1782, he was visiting Jane Mecom's residence at Cambridge near Boston. His next stop was New York City.

## Visual Evidence in Wright's Later Creations

In 1793, Joseph Wright was given the title of "*First Draughtsman and Diesinker*" at the United States Mint. He designed and created the dies for the first United States Half Cents and Liberty Cap Large Cents, both of which depicted a pole and a soft cap in the background design. Some past researchers suggest he copied this from Dupré – I suggest Wright copied from himself. A family portrait, of Joseph and Sarah Wright with their children completed in 1793, shows a striking resemblance between Sarah and the portrait seen on the Libertas Americana medal.

It needs to be pointed out that Sarah Vandervoort (later Wright), lived at 11 Queen St., a block away from Patience Wright's shop at 100 Queen St. in New York City. Joseph Wright first met Sarah sometime between the beginning of 1770 and the latter part of 1771 when he lived at 100 Queen St. in NYC with his family.

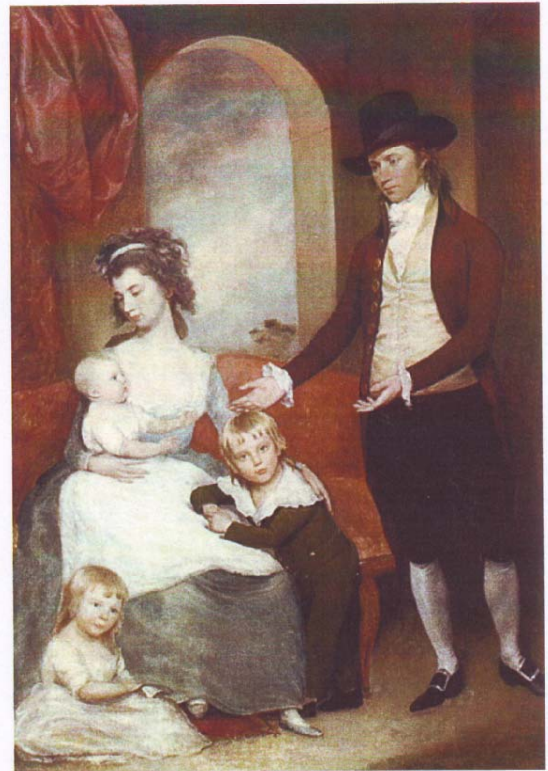
After a small fire broke out in the Wright wax shop (accidentally started by one of the children), Joseph went back to Philadelphia in late 1771 to further his studies but, after a few months, he returned to New York City, and ended up going to London with his two sisters Phoebe and Betsy. Patience Wright wanted her children to be with her.

But the evidence does not stop there. The 1792 American Dismes and 1793 Half Cents depict the same model, which I contend is Sarah Wright. Notice the long, thick strands of unbrushed hair, the long neck, and the

distinctive straight sloping nose and high cheeks.

## Sarah Wright - 1793

From family portrait on the front cover of "Joseph Wright – American Artist 1756-1793"



Joseph and Sarah Wright with Children -- 1793

Joseph Wright was involved with the beginnings of American coinage designs and die sinking. This is evidenced in a letter by Thomas Jefferson, then Secretary of State and the government official responsible for the U.S. Mint, when he wrote about an overlooked Comitia Americana medal for Henry Lee, "*After I returned to America, Genl. Lee applied to me for the medal voted him by Congress, which Mr. Morris's list had by mistake omitted, and producing to me the resolution of Congress for the purpose I put it in hand with Wright to be executed in Philadelphia. Wright, as well as*

*I recollect, would not agree to warrant against the quality of the steel. His dies broke after they were executed, so that this matter was not concluded when I left Philadelphia".* Jefferson left Philadelphia for the summer on July 13, 1792. He had given the commission to Wright who was there working as an engraver, and had already created designs and dies for the new United States coinage.

## Who Was Augustin Dupré?

In 1782, Augustin Dupré was the **assistant engraver** at the Paris Mint. Dupré, along with Chief Engraver Pierre-Simon-Benjamin DuVivier and medallist Nicholas Gatteaux, executed ten *Comitia Americana* medals during the 1780's, Dupré having engraved three such pieces. On the 1781 Daniel Morgan medal, Dupré signed in Latin at the bottom "Dupré Inv.Et.F" – meaning "Dupré created and made" (F standing for Fecit). In the case of the *Libertas Americana* obverse, there is only "Dupré" and nothing more. That, in itself, is a possible indicator that someone other than Dupré created the portrait for the *Libertas Americana* medal. It has been presumed, based on a later claim, that Espirit-Antoine Gibelin (Brongniart's painter friend) created the design that was chosen for the reverse, even though Dupré signed that working die with his last name followed by "F". It is rather puzzling that the "F" is found on the reverse, but it is possible that the "F" indicates Dupré "made" (engraved) both dies rather than creating the actual designs, especially since the main elements had previously been outlined by Franklin (Minerva and infant Hercules) and Gibelin (leopard with a crown). Interestingly, Franklin never mentioned anything about a leopard in his 1782 letters. Although the feline depicted has been called a lion by American writers since the 1880's, this is not an accurate label based on the original 1783 French description of Franklin's medal.

A stylized sketch of the reverse design with a different display of the main characters and lettering, dated 1783, is located at the American Philosophical Society in Philadelphia. This is signed "A. Dupré fecit" in a circle on the lower left and is pictured in the "*Comitia Americana*" book, p.185. However, there is also an earlier sketch by E.A.Gibelin, closer to Franklin's original concept with an actual cradle near the infant, located in the Musée de Blarenecourt in France. Brongniart wrote two more letters to Franklin. The January 23 letter reads, "*I have the honor of sending to Mr. Franklin two new proofs of the medal, noting that the head is not quite as perfect as it should be, that the serpents held by the child will be larger and better drawn; moreover the engraver put "intans" instead of "infans" and this spelling mistake shall be corrected. I have the honor of reminding Mr. Franklin that he had promised what he shall have inscribed on both sides at the bottom of the medal, and this matter alone prevents its completion.*" Brongniart mentions at the end of his January 31 letter, "*The engraver who desires to finish this work...*"

Since we know that Dupré was the engraver, he must be the one to whom Brongniart refers. It seems inconsistent for Brongniart to refer to Dupré as a "sculpteur" in December and as an "engraver" four months later. [The French word "sculpteur" can mean either sculptor or engraver—ed.] As far as I have been able to determine, there was no direct communication between Franklin and Dupré regarding any aspect of the *Libertas Americana* medal.

Finally, there are few sculptures in plaster, wax, stone, terra cotta, or any other material actually confirmed as being done by Dupré. The "*Comitia Americana*" frontispiece displays a large terra cotta model similar to the *Libertas Americana* reverse, which is currently attributed to Dupré. However, this was once attributed as the work of Clodion and is only similar not identical to the one used;

additionally, and this may be significant, it is unsigned.

In summary, despite the longstanding tradition according the design of the Libertas obverse to Augustin Dupré, there is no direct proof that this is indeed the case. Likewise, there is no direct proof that Joseph Wright executed the design. However, there is a strong case for Wright that has never before been presented and that we now commend to your consideration.

**[Some readers will disagree with Mr. Moulton but any fair-minded person must concede that he has done a lot of homework. It is fitting that the importance of this topic should be reinforced by last week's sale of a cliché of the Libertas obverse for \$57,500!—ed.]**

## Letters to the Editor

Dear Mr. Sallay,

I am an Italian student attending the University of Bologna. I am doing some research on the Sir Edward Thomason Medals series and I have recently bumped into your article on the Medal Collectors of America website (<http://www.medalcollectors.org/Guides/TMB/TMB.html>). I have already managed to get the book by Thomason, *Memoirs during Half a Century*, but I would like to acquire some more information, if possible. Do you think you can give me advice?

I thank you for your attention.

Best regards,

Carola Bosi.

Hi Carola,

I'm sorry to say that I don't know much more about Thomason or his Medallic Bible series than what is on the MCA website. I hope

you noticed that there are also photographs of all 60 of the Medallic Bible medals on the website, but visible only if you click on the little word "pic" next to each title. Although the original photos of the medals from my set are very high resolution (3MB), the photos on the website are low resolution (60KB) in order to make downloading easier. If you wanted to see examples of the Franklin Mint version, there are sets available this week on eBay in both silver (Item number: 150234760431) and bronze (Item number: 300215046102).

To aid in your research, you might contact Christopher Eimer, a highly experienced and authoritative (and very nice) British medal dealer. You could contact him through his website:

[www.christophereimer.co.uk](http://www.christophereimer.co.uk).

Good luck with your research!

Best regards,

John Sallay

Donald (Scarinci),

Here is some information resulting from the Audio History portion of our teleconference yesterday.

Bob Fritsch

Bob,

I have asked several here and we all agree. You don't want an audio only interview, you want to use a digital video camera and get the audio and visual at the same time. The camera should be set up on a tripod with the interviewer off camera. The camera would be focused on the person being interviewed. Check the lighting to make sure you have a good image on screen. You are not interviewing a shadow, but a person.

Arranging in advance to meet in a public place like a coin shop or a library might be

helpful for the lighting aspect if his home is not well lit. A neutral background that is not cluttered will keep the viewer focused on him instead of piles of papers and such.

You will want to talk with the expert a few minutes before the camera starts rolling, to get acquainted with him, if he is not well known by the interviewer. The club should compile a list of questions to be answered and share the list with the expert, giving him an idea of what you want from him. (The list can even be sent to him in advance so that he can prepare material or samples, if not just having the information at hand to remind him of things he wants to say.)

Try to keep the clock in mind. It should not "run on forever". Half an hour to 45 minutes max was suggested. That way it does not drag on for the expert and he will be fresh and interesting.

Hopefully, this will be of help to you. Good luck and happy interviewing. This is a good project to preserve a wealth of knowledge.

Sandy  
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hill@money.org  
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